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LECTURE FIFTH:
UNDER THE PATRONAGE
OF
THE GLASGOW
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

ON CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY, AS IMPEACHING ITS INTRINSIC EFFICIENCY.

DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 31st, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL,
JOHN-STREET.

BY THE REV. DAVID KING.
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LECTURE V.

THE Lecturers by whom I have been preceded, have already introduced the subject under discussion, and shown the connexion of Church and State to be unscriptural, unjust, and injurious. It now falls to me to vindicate the Gospel from the suspicion of requiring inadmissible assistance. In treating of this branch of the argument, I shall endeavour to show—

I. That the Civil Establishment of Christianity charges it with inefficiency; and

II. That the charge is altogether unfounded.

My first position is—That the Civil Establishment of Christianity charges it with inefficiency. The incorporation of the Church with the State has sometimes, indeed, received from its friends explanations and defences, which, if admitted, go far to obviate this objection. It has been averred that a State Endowment is not an essential constituent of a National Church; that though it were withdrawn, the chartered Churches of these realms would still subsist, and be more prosperous than ever; and that the Civil Establishment of Religion is, on the whole, to be vindicated rather as due from the magistrate, than necessary for the Gospel. These views of the cause which we combat, will be found in the speeches and writings of some of its ablest supporters. And, assuredly, if the Church be so very independent as they allege, and receive State assistance as a mark of respect, which could have been well enough dispensed with, though very becoming in the respectful statesman, none can impute an acknowledgment of weakness to such a representation of the question. But if this ground is taken, let it be maintained, and not exchanged for contrary positions as convenience may require. Let it be distinctly understood that

Establishments are held to be right, because it is conceived a duty in the ruler to afford help where it is not needed,—where it can be of no service,—and where its only effect is to impair the prosperity of the religion of Jesus. Let us hear no more, likewise, about the Highlands and other needy portions of our country, as justifying State interposition; for, according to this theory of our opponents, they have no necessities which the Church cannot as well meet by its own resources, as by the amicable alliance of earthly governments. That our brethren take their stand on this footing, is all fair and reasonable; and it is withal so like our own, as to present cause for friendly congratulation rather than hostile conflict. We may still differ a little about the duty of the magistrate doing what is confessedly useless, and even hurtful; but about the innate stability of the Church we are, in this case, at one; and so soon as the ruler shall be persuaded to quit, as ruler, the courts of the Temple, then, since we shall mutually account no damage to have been sustained, our agreement will be perfected.

It is to be lamented, however, that this moderate ground is not generally or consistently occupied by Churchmen. The calm statement of magisterial duty is exchanged for the timid cry of ecclesiastical danger. The ruin of religion, and the prevalence of heresy, infidelity, and crime, are despairingly anticipated, as the inevitable results of withdrawing civil aid, and entrusting the Church to its inherent energies. Such gloomy forebodings are most lamentable, whether well or ill grounded. If the Gospel be so weak and so dependent for its endurance on an arm of flesh, as these alarming apprehensions suppose, then we have to mourn its weakness and dependence, and hide our heads from the contempt of the scorner. But if the Gospel be not so feeble and ineffectual; if it can look with dauntless courage from its own walls and battlements on a combined and hostile world; if it can not only maintain the defensive, but send forth its armies and repel its assailants, and plant its banners on their conquered countries;—then how calamitous is it that the friends of Zion should so depreciate its strength, and bring dishonour upon its Lord, and distress upon themselves, by quaking and wailing for imaginary perils.

To profess belief in the Gospel, and yet pronounce it unequal to its ends, is not very reasonable or pleasant; and the abettors of Establishments try to escape from the dilemma,

by averring that the Gospel has no efficiency which supersedes the use of means, and by pleading for civil aid as a part of its appropriate instrumentality.

To this reply, as being the only one conceivable, I propose giving all manner of dutiful consideration.

And I set out with readily conceding that the religion of Christ does not dispense with means, but, on the contrary, requires their use as indispensable to personal profiting and general usefulness in every province of faith and practice. But surely no person of any sense or conscience will regard this admission as deciding the controversy. The character of the means proposed is still subject of debate. A country cannot be defended from invaders without means of defence; but who will deny that help might be resorted to which would be indicative of weakness; as, for example, the alliance of foreign powers, and still more of hostile powers, obtained by humiliating petitions and mercenary proffers. Such means would surely not be comparable for a moment to the native prowess and resources of the country itself. Sparta might have repelled the haughty Xerxes by entering into league with potent kingdoms; but how much did it exalt the fame of her glory, that her own three hundred sons preserved her independence, and baffled, at Thermopylæ, invading millions. The whole question turns, then, on the nature of the aid to which we betake ourselves. And a little reflection will be sufficient, I think, to convince a candid inquirer that the State assistance called in by National Churches, is exactly of the hostile character above supposed, and consequently disparaging to the native independence and power of the kingdom of the Redeemer.

Let us inspect the State assessing for the church, the community assessed, and finally, the penalties of law enforcing assessment. These present all the stages of Legislative interposition, and all of them we embrace in one condemnatory indictment.

First in order is the State; and it is needless to look beyond our own, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons. It goes by the name of a Christian State, but we must not be misled by courteous terms. Is any security provided that its members shall be Christians? Jews, it is true, are excluded, but free admission is afforded to Socinians, and Infidels, and Papists, and all those reviled classes who are held to pollute us by participation in our sentiments. In

what sense, then, do such an indiscriminate confederation constitute a Christian magistracy. We may be told that they should be Christians; but this evasion is pitiful. See how it would apply in any other case. Suppose we should collect at random a heterogeneous mob, comprising the sober and the sensual, the decent and the abandoned, would we be justified in calling this mongrel throng a Christian Church, because all of them should be Christians? No: it is clear as day, that before any association of persons, in whatever capacity they may be associated, can be considered Christian, they must enter through some ordeal which is understood at least to test their Christianity. But our Monarchical throne and Parliamentary houses have no such discriminating gateways; for neither gross ignorance, nor gross error, nor gross immorality, would exclude any from their lofty seats. In what sense, then, I again ask, are high places Christian, which are equally open to the pious and the profane, to him that sweareth and him that feareth an oath.

We may be told it is a pity that tests are not instituted, and a sore calamity that some tests which did exist have been abolished. As much of the controversy hinges on this point, allow me to request for it, though it be not very fascinating, a minute's attention. I observe, then, that if tests are employed, they should, so far as possible, be sufficient for their ends. This remark partakes of a truism, its justice is so apparent. How can it be controverted that tests, which are engaged for the purpose of making a State Christian, should be such as may prove those tested to be Christians in the judgment of enlightened charity. A criterion, dividing, not between the righteous and the wicked, but between one grade of the wicked and another, and pronouncing this class of sinners fit members, and that class of sinners unfit members of a Christian State, is a mere figment, delusive and destructive in itself, and unsupported by a syllable of revelation. Where tests, therefore, are employed to Christianize States, they should be such as we acknowledge, needful in other cases to establish Christian faith and character; and so our Monarchs, and Barons, and Commoners, will all pass through the same ordeal to their magisterial seats, by which persons, in well disciplined churches, approach to the institution of the Lord's Supper. This demand of all civil posts for accredited saints, as the only lawful statesmen will overturn every Government in Europe; and was, indeed,

the very demand, which, at one period of the Reformation, created confusion, and rebellion, and bloodshed, in Germany. Yet there is no resting place short of this revolutionary extreme, if religious tests are prefixed to civil office. But, I observe farther, that we are presently speaking not to fancies, but to facts—to existing substantial realities. The British Constitution imposes no such tests, nor tests deserving the name of any description; and our legislators consequently are, or may be, just as fair a specimen of the world as any group of men, any where and any how assembled. And if then, the love of the world be enmity with God, if the love of the world be so incompatible with the love of the Father that they cannot co-exist, I appeal to every honourable mind, whether Christianity, without confessing itself reduced to the last shifts of weakness, can stretch an imploring arm to these same wordly legislators, and cry out in plaintive misery, *O save us—we perish!*

Having surveyed the State assessing, we look now at the community assessed, for the church. And this province of the argument is so independent of the preceding, that in discussing it we may allow the former reasoning to go for nothing. Let it now be supposed then, that legislators are in every respect what they should be; and that this has been ascertained by some legitimate indications of Christian proficiency. Still, the abettors of Establishments do not escape the serious charge of impugning the sufficiency of the Gospel. It is not from these statesmen themselves that the legal provision for the Church is exacted, but from the commonwealth at large. They are simply the medium of access to the general community. To say, then, that the Church requires the aid of the State, is to say, that it requires the aid of the body politic. Nay, more, it cannot require the statesman's aid to collect money that would be contributed at any rate; so that the magistrate can be needed only to extort supplies from the reluctant. To need the ruler, then, is to need the infidel and sensualist whom he compels. To such classes Churchmen come through governors, and say, we must have your help, or we are undone. We would like you, no doubt, to believe our doctrines; and if you can make up your mind to that, good and well. But, if you hesitate about adopting, there must, at all events, be no hesitation in supporting them; for, if you withdraw your support they will sink, and there will be shortly no such doctrines in the land to be believed. The

scoffer, it may be supposed, jeers and asks—Is this your machinery for conversion? Is it thus you expect to convince me? Would you have me believe your creed for its imbecility? Can I not do without a faith that cannot do without the unbeliever; and must I depend on a godliness which depends on my gain, even while that gain bears for its inscription the wages of iniquity? It must be so, is the ignominious reply; we have no alternative; our religion cannot dispense with your constrained and scornful pittances. O! What religion is it that is brought so low? Is it, can it be the religion of Jesus, of Him who died the more signally to conquer death, and descended into the grave to show how easily he could spoil it for ever? High as party feeling now runs, and strongly as it inclines to its party views, I cannot resist the conviction, that if the ministers and members of our National Churches would still scan with some composure, the dependence they assign to the religion of Jesus, many of them would forbear to inflict on Him this second humiliation. If, instead of terminating their view in a supposed pious magistrate, about whom they are ever descanting, they would look beyond the magistrate of whatever description, to the motley classes, whose succour he extorts, I should think they would recoil from casting Zion's maintenance on her haters, and denounce as false and calumnious, her alleged need of their assistance.

Having surveyed the State assessing, and the community assessed, and found the aid of both affronting to the Church, let us look finally at the penalties of law enforcing assessment. These furnish the Church, as Saul did David, with armour and a coat of mail; and happy were it, if the former could say, as did the latter, I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them. The Church has proved them; and hence is it smitten and discomfitted before the Philistines. A mind which has learned at the feet of Jesus, and inhaled the meekness and gentleness of the Prince of Peace, revolts from the allegation of using arms in his service; and is ready, from an impression of its enormity, to discredit and deny its truth. But no discredit or denial amounts to disproof; and it remains, after all, a certain matter of fact, that the sword holds a principal place among the instrumentality of our Establishments. Of course, the sword is expressive generally of those pains and penalties which the magistrate is empowered

to inflict; and by them, and them only, does he elicit that provision for the Church which is solicited at his hands.

To say that the minister does not coerce personally, is a miserable shelter. The magistrate engages the bailiff; but who engages the magistrate? In whose service does he act? All is for the Church, and with its sanction, and under its auspices; and how then, with the semblance of fairness, can it disclaim the solemn responsibility? This much, at least, is perfectly obvious, that if Established Protestantism be not accountable for its judicial inflictions, neither was Established Popery for its guilty slaughters; for it shed the blood of saints, by handing them over to the secular power, to whose tender mercies it insultingly recommended them.

But the reply will be forthcoming—there are no such scenes now. Are there not? It is true, where payment is not refused, goods are not spoiled, and blood is not shed; and merciless, indeed, is the despotism that needlessly tortures unresisting victims. But let any conscientiously decline to maintain a dominant faith, from a conviction of its untruth; and then the imprisonments of Scotland, and the slaughters of Ireland, sufficiently disclose and expound the last appeal of our National Churches. But still this representation may be held to be extreme. Whatever may be the case of certain localities, surely, it may be urged, the collection of tithes or teinds is commonly peaceable, and has no affinity to the battle of the warrior, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood! So the pious members of Establishments think, and in this persuasion uphold the system. But let me remind them, that prevailing quiet does not always argue the absence of violence. Suppose that a country yields despairingly to an invading foe without fighting at all, is it not as truly, in that case, subjugated by arms, as if conflicting hosts had met, and thousands fallen. To change the figure, is the slave never driven by the lash, unless when it is applied to his person; and are his exertions independent and free, when he works merely from observing a cart-whip in the hands of the driver? Discussion on a point so plain, is really waste speaking. It may be easily brought to an issue. If an Established Church does not rest on pains and penalties, then let them be abolished, for non essentials can be dispensed with. But if it cannot surrender them, if their extinction would be its extinction, then, we call on Churchmen, as men of uprightness, to own at once their obligations

to the military. Do not at once retain lethal weapons and disavow them. No means should be engaged which require such equivocation; and seeing that violence is necessary to State Churches, the necessity should be ingenuously confessed, and courageously advocated. With the accoutrements of the warrior, our opponents will then display something of his courage. But there is scarcely one element of Establishments for which their abettors thus unflinchingly declare. Instead of avowing and vindicating their own articles of belief, they are more anxious to appear in possession of ours; and many a laboured attempt have they made to show that their practices embody our principles. They scruple, for example, to admit that magistrates interfere with religion in deciding between creeds, and stamping law on the decision; and unite with us in condemning *civico-ecclesiastical* interference. They will not allow that civil assessments for a Church involve the aid of compulsion; and pronounce the Church of Scotland wholly Voluntary in her maintenance. They cannot concede that an endowed Church derives one penny from Dissenters, however largely they are taxed for its support; and while the fingers of the tax-gatherer are in our pockets, proclaim and reiterate in our ears, that they subsist like ourselves on their own exclusive finances, and that their ecclesiastical fabrics and worship cost us nothing. And, in short, speaking more immediately to the point in hand, they deny that ultimate dependence on arms, at all implicates in their use, and pretend to no less abhorrence than ourselves of all resorts to violence in the service of religion. All these paradoxes have been put forth to obtain for Established, the favour of unestablished Churches. But the attempt is as futile as it is self-condemnatory. To a mind retaining the least power of impartial discernment, such strained assumption of liberal maxims in upholding illiberal immunities, can have no effect, except in disclosing a felt, though unconfessed weakness in the system so defended. When strong and tenable ground is occupied, there is no need for disclaiming its occupancy, and urging ludicrous pretensions to an enemy's position. Meanwhile, we must account it a palpable truism, that a revenue is exacted by the sword, which is exacted by its influence; and we put it, most solemnly put it, to the conscience of all engaging civil penalties in promotion of religious objects, whether they can repeat with unmisgiving minds the Apostolic averment,—“The weapons of our warfare

are not carnal." Scorn our interdict as you may; but O, despise not him that speaketh to you from heaven, and who is even now, if ye will only hear his voice, proclaiming over your belligerant discipleship—"Put up thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

From these illustrations, then, it appears that State alliance is, throughout, foreign and hostile to the constitution of the Church; and hence, in all its stages, through rulers, subjects, and penalties, disparaging to the essential efficiency of the Gospel of Christ. That civil aid is a defence, I care not to disprove. It is enough for me that its walls are not salvation, and its gates are not praise; and when you rear such protection around Zion, and tell me, This is her security,—I reply, in the indignant language of the Prophet, "Take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

That this charge of inadequacy is preferred by Establishments against Christianity, I must now hold as proved. And I proceed to show, under the Second Division of my subject, that the charge is unjust—that the Gospel has no such impotency; but possesses, on the contrary, all requisite powers for the accomplishment of its purposes.

In applying myself to this part of my work, I really cannot help feeling as if it were superfluous. Prove the adequacy of Christianity to Christians!—Surely the task might be spared me. Were I debating with the idolater or infidel, I might deem it reasonable to assert and establish the sufficiency of the Gospel; and, in reply to his cavils, give him a reason for the hope that is in me. But when reasoning with opponents whom I am much more inclined to call brethren, many of whom I rejoice to consider partakers of like precious faith with us, I really feel, when summoned by them to show the Gospel equal to its exigencies, as if the summons were a piece of friendly pleasantry,—as if with jocular gravity they were asking a demonstration that the sun can dissipate the shades of the night, or the ocean bear such gallant ships as float in thousands on its waters. When they pronounce the Church dependent on secular power, and implore its enemies to preserve it from ruin, I feel as if creation were pronounced in peril, and props were gathered to support the heavens, or cords to fasten the foundations of the earth. If the figure fail, it is from weakness; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Church is the avowed care of Him,

one word of whose sayings shall not pass away. As proof, however, is demanded, let it be granted; and I shall be glad if I succeed in one instance in dispelling a sceptical cowardly alarm, though I should fail of commanding entire conviction. I shall be glad if any troubled saint in this assembly, alarmed at the agitation of the times, and fearing for the ark of God, shall hear in the succeeding illustrations the seasonable call, "Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!" In proof, then, of the efficiency of the Gospel, I adduce—

First, *The Character of its Doctrines*.—These doctrines are true, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation. Once more I must remind you, that I am not arguing with unbelievers. To set out with the assumption, in contending with them, that Christianity is true, would be taking for granted what required to be proved. But the truth of the Gospel is ceded by our brethren; and as respects them, consequently we are quite free to argue from its truth. In truth, then, I maintain, is safety. Where opinion is false, it may be exploded; and when its falsity is understood in high quarters, it may be expedient, in the probable anticipation of argument failing, to hold force in reserve; but those shifts and reserves are not needed in defence of truth, for its fortresses are impregnable. It admits, it courts, it demands inquiry; and if it may defy the infidel's scrutiny, I humbly think it may dispense with his services. What obstructions has not truth surmounted. The astronomical system of Copernicus and Galileo was opposed by virulent and protracted persecution; but it was true, and it prevailed. The enlightened maxims of Socrates occasioned his cruel death, but they were true; and though he died, they live. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was ridiculed by his contemporaries; but it was true, and now its acceptance is universal. And though, then, Christianity be violently resisted, yet, if it be true, as we believe it is, it also will verify the maxim—“Great is truth, and it shall prevail.”

Perhaps it may be replied, that religion differs in this respect from literature and science. But do we not witness the reverse in facts? Do we not see that even in its corrupted forms the encumbered truths are more powerful to uphold than the encumbering errors to suppress. Observe, for example, Popery in Ireland. It is there subsisting, it is there advancing; and will Churchmen, with all their ab-

horrence of Papists, cede to them the position, that Christ is distinguishable from Anti-Christ, in being weaker and more destructible? If asked by a Roman Catholic wherein their faith differs from his, will they specify, as one of the more obvious features of difference—Yours can survive and flourish amid contempt, and discountenance, and exaction, and all the evils of misgovernment for centuries; but ours has no such inherent vitality; ours is upheld by royal favour,—while the ruler smiles on it, it flourishes; and if, peradventure, he should frown upon it, it would instantly wither!

But I argue not only from the truth of our holy faith abstractly considered, I argue also and specially from the character of its truths. Tenets that are quite accurate, may be so trivial as to be powerless—as to supply no potent stimulus to action. But such are not the doctrines of the cross. Their magnitude and importance transcend all expression and conception. Their representations of sin and the perdition it incurs—of the blood of Christ, and the blessings it procures, of the promised spirit and the renovation he effects, all these fill earth and heaven, time and eternity, with their magnificence. And I request your attention while I unequivocally state it as my conviction, that we cannot conceive of these doctrines being believed, and yet known duties accruing from them fundamentally or habitually neglected. If a man does not believe them, then of course they are pointless to him as untruth; or if a man does believe them, but does not perceive that they require this or that service, then of course he will not obey when he does not suppose himself commanded. But, to say that a man may have faith in these doctrines, and knowledge of his consequent duties—to say, for example, that a man may believe in the Son of God having loved him and given himself for him, and yet refuse, at the request of this Saviour, to sacrifice a little substance for maintaining the very ordinances which convey these tidings, the supposition seems to me intuitively monstrous—I cannot help repudiating it as a self-evident absurdity. These remarks are in the first person, because I have no right to judge the mental impression of another. But I entreat you to judge for yourselves—to survey personally the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the gift of the Spirit, and say if you can conceive of a person truly receiving such a testimony, and yet refusing a reason-

able sacrifice enjoined by this same testimony for its maintenance and extension. On such conduct, you will observe, I am not remarking as undutiful merely, but as impossible; for there is a connection between faith and faithfulness, just as close and indissoluble as there is between the sun in the heavens and the light which he sheds on encircling planets. Our ministerial brethren of the Establishment are accustomed, like ourselves, to contend, in their discourses, and especially in their preparatory Sacramental addresses, called Fencings, that habitual neglect of any known duty disproves Christian profession. Now, surely they will admit, that if state aid were withdrawn, it would be the duty of private Christians to uphold the church rather than allow it to go down; and if then the duty were declined, it would prove, by their own showing, that their church members are no Christians at all. But this would not be the result. A great portion of the members of the Established Church are, we believe, true followers of the Lamb, and would cheerfully follow him in this, as in every province of duty, if you would only give them the opportunity. I hold, then, the doctrines of Christianity to be such that when sincerely believed they are and cannot but be sufficient to secure their maintenance.

In proof of the efficiency of the gospel, I adduce—

Secondly, *its own explicit claims.* To an unbeliever its testimony in its own behalf is unconvincing, but with Christian brethren it should be decisive. I aver, then, that the gospel does not acknowledge weakness, but asserts its possession of irresistible strength. In evidence, I adduce the language of inspiration. “I am not,” says Paul, Rom. i. 16, “ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.” Observe this attestation. The gospel is the power of God: and what is his power? It is omnipotence. Therefore did the apostle of the Gentiles account it his glory and not his disgrace. Could it have been shown him that any truly believed it, and yet remained unreformed; that it failed, for example, to subdue in the believer indifference to fellow-men, or that mean and sordid avarice which would deny them needful instruction, then would he have blushed for his faith. But the contrary was the case. The gospel, he knew, could persuade its recipients to discharge any, and every duty, and

therefore he was not, and therefore we are not, ashamed of its profession.

Again, he observes, in another Epistle, (1 Cor. i. 23,) “ We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The application of these verses to the subject in hand is obvious. We are asked how people can be induced to support and extend the gospel? We answer, by preaching to them *Christ crucified*. Instruct them faithfully in the doctrines and duties of the Cross, and they will communicate the knowledge of Christ to the ends of the earth. On this averment some may fall as on a *stumbling block*, and some may deride and cry *foolishness*. But to all such cavils we oppose the reply—These means cannot fail through weakness, for in the emphatic and oft repeated expressions of the apostle they are the *power of God*, and we dare the professed disciples of Christ to exalt above his power the might of Princes. Is it asked wherein the potency of this preaching lies, that may enable it to produce free offerings, and is it averred that to all appearance it is only weakness? I reply, it will nevertheless prevail, “ Because,” (in the subjoined language of the apostle,) “ the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man.” The verses which succeed are so important in this connexion, that I request for them your especial attention. “ But God,” (says the apostle, verses 27—29,) “ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are. That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Look at the instrumentality of which the divine choice is here alleged, and to which ultimate triumph is here promised, and say, in candour, whether you realize it most in the offerings of voluntary churches or in the machinery of state-favoured establishments? Whether, as respects the world, is wisdom most predicated of the voluntary saint or the imperial statesman? Which is pronounced weak and which mighty? Which is despised? Which is overlooked

in legislative privilege among things that are not? And whether, by the success of the one or the other would the end be best secured, "that no flesh should glory in his presence?" I propose these questions, but I do not answer them. The answers presents themselves with a clearness which cannot be aided by illustration. Say not that humble means were then employed for want of nobler, and till loftier aid should present itself—*God hath chosen them*, and to this hour his choice is unrevoked. Meanwhile, with these inspired statements before me, I can listen with indifference, yea with delight, to the fashionable aspersions cast upon our system. We are assailed by the very terms of reproach which the apostle counted it all joy to incur. Urge them then against us. Call our church polity *foolish*. Descant on the *weakness* of the voluntary principle. Denounce casting ministers on its maintenance, and protest that such a support for clergymen is *base*. *Despise* the proposal. Exhibit your statistics for your allied state, and show us that from these we are excluded with *things that are not*. Such accusation may gratify the accusers, but in all this lordly disdain we discern the selection of God and the insignia of victory.

Speaking elsewhere (2 Cor. iv. 7,) of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the same apostle says,— "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God and not of us." I may be told this passage refers to preaching, which God has confessedly devolved on weak imperfect men. I reply, that though suggested by a particular instance, (and this remark applies also to the passages already considered,) the language of the apostle is general, and enunciates obviously general principles. "He has put the treasure in earthen vessels." No, say churchmen, not in all the process of conveyance. At one stage these are too weak to be trusted, and too vile to be honoured. A Christian ministry may be trusted to preach, but not Christian churches to maintain them. The all-important article of pastoral support we must assign to vessels stronger and more splendid—to the power of the state and the parade of royalty. Thus are the means changed; and thus also is the end defeated, for how can the power appear any longer to be of God and not of man? How can the terrors of civil law bespeak the excellence or promote the praise of that divine faith which they are engaged to

succour under the insulting allegation that it would perish without them? O cast away these gaudy utensils. Restore, we entreat you, the misplaced treasure to its original and appointed *earthen vessels*. Pride and unbelief will vociferate—Ruin. These vessels will never do. They are utter frailty and baseness. They are; but so much the more will their preservation of the true riches prove the excellency of the power to be of God and not of us; and again will the ever-needful exhortation be enforced,—He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.

I might cite such passages from almost every page, and certainly from every book of the New Testament. But I shall adduce only one more,—“Though we walk,” says Paul, (2d Cor. x. 3,) “in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” On the explicit disclaimer of carnal weapons by the Apostle in these verses I have already remarked. What I wish you to observe now, is, his assigned reason for rejecting them and preferring the spiritual. The carnal are now adopted by churchmen as alone efficacious—Paul disowned them for their feebleness. The spiritual are now relinquished by churchmen for their inefficacy: faith, and love, and such principles, are pronounced by them no security for the church—Paul chose them for their power. He preferred them to the bow and the arrow, the sword and the shield, as being immeasurably mightier, not indeed in themselves, but through God, to the utter demolition of all possible obstructions. All nameable difficulties he includes within the sure conquest of this divine armour. Point you to the dark desolate places of our land, and ask how these are to be supplied? What are they, I respond, but satan’s *strongholds*? Speak you of the ungodliness and regardlessness of the people as precluding all demand for religious instruction? What are these, I ask, but “things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ.” The Apostle’s language has no meaning, if not applicable to such barriers, and with all consideration, I add, that it has no truth, if the spiritual power of the gospel be not adequate to their total subversion. True, the ignorant

may not request or provide instructors, but to say that the gospel will not induce believers to make that moderate sacrifice which, without intrenching on the necessaries, or almost the comforts of life, will enable them to send and to sustain the messengers of peace, is to pronounce the plaudits of the Apostle extravagant panegyric, and nothing better than great swelling words of vanity. But I will believe the Apostle of our faith, and not its faint-hearted adherents. I will believe that the Word of God, as the sword of the Spirit, can, without the aid of human law, outrival its achievements, and bring provinces under subjection which set its authority at defiance.

In support of the efficacy of the gospel, I adduce--

Thirdly, the evidence of facts. Here I intended to consider at some length the glorious conquests of a free-will Christianity in the primitive age—its acknowledged preservation of sound doctrine and worship in the valleys of Piedmont during the dark ages—its signal overthrow of the papal establishment in different nations of Europe at the period of the reformation, and more lately, its rapid supply of the American states with the ordinances of Christianity. I find, however, that I cannot review these, however cursorily, and I pass from them with the less reluctance, that I entertain hopes of another lecturer discussing them separately and more satisfactorily at a subsequent stage of the course.

Meanwhile, I specify the testimony of experience only where it is most disputed, namely, in our own country; and after all that has been urged to the contrary, I hold that the ecclesiastical condition of Scotland makes out a triumphant case for the voluntary principle. When so much is written and published about the deficiency of church accommodation, the subjoined tabular statement, drawn up at my request by my esteemed friend, Mr. Elles of Saltcoats, will be heard with interest.*

(1.) “ The following calculation will show that though there were no Dissenters in Scotland, there is no want of ministers, if there was a fair distribution of them :—

* This communication was not received in time to be introduced in the lecture as delivered in Glasgow.

In 1831, the population of Scotland was,	2,365,807
Suppose that to this date the increase has been,	134,193
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The total amount at present is,	2,500,000
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Now, there are at present in Scotland, inclusive of those admitted into the number last year by the deed of the General Assembly, Parish Ministers,	1,007
Add those connected with chapels; but which, for some reason, of which I am ignorant, are not put down under the respective Presbyteries where they are situated,	18
Add Collegiate Churches,	30
Missionaries on Royal Bounty,	34
Do. employed by Society for promoting Christian Knowledge,	8
<hr/>	
Add for Chapels in progress of erection, and which are likely soon to have Ministers, (very moderate,)	1,097
<hr/>	
	3
<hr/>	
	1,100

Now, this will give one minister in connection with the Established Church for every 2,272 of the actual population. In the Assembly's circular, Church accommodation is required for the half of the population; and in this proportion there is one minister for every 1,136 persons. But Dr. Cleland says that two-thirds of the population above 12 years of age is in proportion to the whole as 100 to 214. Accordingly, legal accommodation is required only for 1,157,408—and at this rate there is a minister for every 1,052 persons for whom the law appoints accommodation to be made.

(2.) The following shows the proportion of Presbyterian Ministers to the actual population and legal accommodation:—

Established Ministers,	1,100
United Secession, (in Scotland,)	319
Reformed Synod,	33
Original Burgher Synod, (in Scotland,)	46
Relief Synod, Do.	101
Original Seceders,	33
<hr/>	
Ministers,	1,632

This is one Presbyterian Minister to every 1,532 of actual—and one for every 710—of the population to be legally accommodated.

(3.) The following shows the proportion of Ministers of all denominations to the actual population—and to the number for whom accommodation is legally required:—

Established Ministers,	.	.	.	.	.	1,100
Presbyterian Dissenters,	.	.	.	.	.	532
Congregational Union,	.	.	.	.	.	84
Episcopalian,	.	.	.	.	.	75
Baptists, (not mentioned in the Almanacs,) but say						30
Methodists, and other denominations, say	.	.	.	.	.	50
Total of Protestant Ministers,						1,871

Now, this is one Protestant Minister to every 1,336 of the actual population—and one for every 619 persons that the law says church accommodation should be provided for; and I believe you will admit that my estimate of those bodies of professing Christians, at whose numbers I have guessed, as I have no means of ascertaining their real number, is considerably below the truth. My authority for the other numbers is the County Almanack for this year. It gives 50 Catholic Ministers and Congregations—and of course this shows that the provision is still greater. I may remark, that I have not in these calculations taken into account any assistants in parishes, of which there are some regularly employed and provided for, such as St. Ninian's; nor have I included many of our stations, such as those in the Glasgow Presbytery, where we have a number of preachers regularly labouring."

Whatever increase of accommodation these computations show is almost wholly to be ascribed to voluntary benevolence. Dr. Chalmers, I think, observes somewhere, that owing to the amalgamation of parishes, two having in many instances been blended into one, they are not more numerous now than at their original division—setting aside the fact that the late chapels of ease, though now parish churches, are still upheld by voluntary contribution. In the establishment, then, there has been stagnation, if not reduction—to the voluntary principle belongs all the praise of progression. But let us examine the representations and pleadings of our establishment brethren.

The Committee of the General Assembly own, in their circular, that "there might be no reason for their present application to government, were it safe to let matters proceed spontaneously." "Could the supply," say they, "of

the enormous deficiency be confined to the energies and resources of the Voluntary system, any extension of the Establishment might be unnecessary and uncalled for. But the contrary," they allege, "is the lesson and the demonstration of all experience." They proceed to stigmatize the Voluntary system for "its own inherent and essential feebleness," and dissuade the community from a delusive "confidence in its sufficiency to accomplish that which it is unable for." And all this, they appropriately conclude by the assertion, "A people left to its operation alone will perish for lack of knowledge." Now, what is the principle that is so disparaged? It is not, you must observe, our Voluntary Church Societies. Whether our cause would have progressed better with or without these associations, is disputed by its friends. But it is not the mode of defending the principle:—it is the principle itself which churchmen charge with impotency. And what is the Voluntary principle? It is the power of the Gospel to influence the will—to realize its own promise, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The contemned principle is nothing else and nothing less than "the power, which," in the language of an apostle, "worketh in us," and according to which, he assures us, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." This is the principle now branded, I do not say designedly, but inconsiderately, with inherent essential feebleness; and which, instead of getting credit for doing exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, is accused of doing exceedingly little, beneath all we can ask or think; so that no terms of contempt can be too contemptuous to express its incompetency. A people left to it, are left, we are told, to perdition: to what worse alternative could they possibly be consigned? Let none then deceive themselves with names. I repeat, that the Voluntary principle, for which we contend, is only and wholly the efficiency of the Gospel. This is the principle which is called in question; this is the principle, which, as one set for the defence of the Gospel, I now endeavour to defend. And I warn every professor of religion against the rash utterance of a syllable to its prejudice. Dispute, if you will, the warrior's pretensions to courage, or the statesman's to wisdom, or the orator's to eloquence; a disparagement of their claims may be peevish, prejudiced, unworthy,

yet towards fellow-creatures it is scarcely presumptuous. But, O beware of impugning the adequacy of His arm to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, and flee the end of those over whose judicial doom the sentence is written—"They limited the Holy One of Israel."

These general remarks, however, will still be met by the allegation of experience. "The Voluntary principle," says an expounder of the Assembly's circular, "has limits beyond which it is found in practice to be utterly powerless." I reply, the limits of the voluntary principle cannot have been found, for its progression is not yet terminated. The Secession was originated by four ministers, the Relief by one. The origin of other dissenting denominations had a like resemblance to the mustard seed, and under all the disadvantages of small numbers, slender means, civil disabilities, general opprobrium, competing with a church, comprehensive, wealthy, endowed, chartered, fashionable, we have gained every year in relative strength, till our demand for equal rights is hung this day in doubtful balance with the attempt to withhold them. And still we are progressing. What, then, is found about limits? How can you find the limits of the ocean's tide while it is yet rolling onwards at your feet, and the sand marks of last hour are surmounted this hour by the exulting billow. But though we are gaining upon the general community, we are making no impression, it is alleged, on the poorer classes. Are we not? Look at our churches and the established churches, and say whether the great proportion of church-going poor are not in our fellowship. The fact that in all the nine old town churches of Edinburgh, there are only seven hundred and fifteen of the old town inhabitants (mostly the poorer classes) who are seat holders, and that the poor, with this small exception, go to the dissenting churches when they attend church at all, is a most extraordinary disclosure, and presents a sample of what will be found to prevail more or less throughout the kingdom generally. Our churches then, the poor themselves being judges, are best adapted to supply their wants. But the establishment, it is answered, is so limited, that it is untried. Extend it, say our brethren, and then see what wonders it will accomplish. Whatever it may do, this is an acknowledgment, *that its doings are as yet prospective*; that, from whatever cause, the Church of Scotland has not proved hitherto the instructress of the poor.

This much, as concerns limits, is confessed to “have been found by experience.” And why expect better things in time coming? In some cases high seat rents may be affirmed to have excluded the poor. But go to country parishes, where the sittings of voluntary churches cost the labourer some shillings yearly, while those of the establishment might be obtained almost or altogether gratis, and still the result is the same, still we have the body of poor worshippers; and there can be no hesitation over which church to say most appropriately—To the poor the Gospel is preached. The case, then, is plain; if you wish to benefit the poor, alleviate their burdens, and enable them to fulfil a desire, so plainly evinced by them, and so honourable to their character, not to serve God with that which cost them nothing. But though we have the poorer classes, we are told we have not the poorest—the wretched dregs of society! And who has them? Have our brethren got them? If not, we are on a level. But there is a gross deception in this representation. Why are our poor not deplorably destitute? Just because they are our poor—I mean in contradistinction to the ungodly poor—because they are our church members; because they hear and obey the message, that saith “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things else shall be added unto you;” and because, when they cannot labour, they receive from their brethren, though less amply than I could wish, the benefit of the precept, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Extreme wretchedness is commonly the attendant of crime, and it would say little for our churches, if the poor, on entering their fellowship, did not better their circumstances by amending their practice. We could point to not a few, once indolent and evil doing, who are now industrious and well doing from attendance in our churches. And besides those recovered, who may estimate the numbers preserved from guilty destitution? Who will affirm that but for voluntary churches the thousands of outcast population would have been ten thousands? And who may ascribe powerlessness to the principle that has averted such a fearful accumulation of ignorance, iniquity, and wretchedness? This much we can say of our churches. To these we must add our missions and schools, instituted directly and exclusively for the ignorant and careless of the population, and without adducing

the details of reports, I pronounce it a calumny refuted by broad indisputable proof, to affirm of this free-will mechanism that it is utterly powerless. It is proving yearly, and monthly, the power of God unto salvation to many a poor sinner that believeth; and whenever the national church has made an inroad on Scottish heathenism, it has been by casting aside the state trammels, and acting on the reviled voluntary system. Taking up the facts, then, just as they stand in this country, the working of the voluntary system proves, we maintain, its decided superiority.

But, as our brethren tell us, their system is not yet fairly tried, I affirm, in response, that our system is only approximating a fair trial. The disadvantages of our commencement were prodigious. It seems almost miraculous to think that Voluntary Churches should so speedily have struggled from such weakness into such strength; from such penury into such resources; from such prevailing contempt into such general acceptance. No wonder they had enough to do, for a time, in supporting the Establishment and in promoting their individual prosperity; and hence, comparatively neglected more comprehensive exertion. But now their own circumstances are becoming, in many cases, easy, and now, therefore, from this vantage ground they are more free to look around with compassionate eye on that field, which is the world. Besides, the obligation to disseminate divine truth is only now receiving that full exhibition which is requisite to its full influence. I have before remarked, that if a person do not believe the truth, it cannot be expected to persuade him, and that even though he do believe it, yet if he is not instructed in its resultant duties, we cannot look for him complying, where he does not suppose himself enjoined. And such exactly has been the case with the support and extension of the gospel. Not only have miserly worldlings been falsely styled Christians, and then cited against the power of Christianity, but true Christians themselves have not been taught to estimate adequately the claims of Christian benevolence. They have not been taught that theirs is the undivided and overwhelming responsibility of promoting or neglecting the evangelization of the world. They have been and are assiduously taught the reverse. It is daily and hourly urged on them that nothing but extravagance or wickedness can expect so much at their hands.

Take a case too common. Here is an easy-minded Christian giving the pounds to mammon and the pence to righteousness, serving the flesh with the feast and the Spirit with the fragments; making sacrifices for his credit, for his family, for all and any objects but for his Saviour and for souls; and to him Churchmen come and say, "Do you know what these Voluntary Christians would have you to do? They would actually have you to spend considerably more for Christ and his kingdom! What absurdity! We look for nothing so irrational: at farthest, we enjoin a very moderate generosity; give us a pittance, and we will go to the state for the rest—they must be wrong-headed or wrong-hearted individuals who would draw more largely on your love to your Lord." I am aware that strong urgency is sometimes employed, but it generally contains even then some self-destroying reservation. Witness the following clause in the Assembly's circular:—"With their utmost strenuousness the Committee will not raise more, and that too in the course of years, than the requisite building expenses, after which the requisite endowment would need to be provided for." Was there ever a more suicidal appeal? A Christian community are told before hand how little they will raise; and this is the only sort of prophecy I know of that can be safely made, because it has the virtue of securing its own fulfilment. Yet, even with this hint before them, exerting all its counteracting influence, the Established Churches were beginning to do well. Many noble subscriptions of £200 each were made in this city, and also large collections obtained, which would have honoured any ecclesiastical communion, when, lo! reviving benevolence is stifled by a clamorous application for additional endowments!! How is it possible for the Voluntary principle to work fairly in these circumstances? What principle ever wrought powerfully so distrusted, deserted, trifled with? Now you appeal to it, now pronounce it powerless, now adopt it for a moment, and now exchange it for its opposite. The duty being divided with the magistrate, is half extinguished; a sense of obligation is proportionally impaired; and, what is more, and worse, he who shows himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him, refuses to bless a stinted dependence on his spirit. The church, equally as the saint, must relinquish these earthly depend-

ences, if it would prove and incontestibly evince the power of the grace of God. How different from this contradictory and vacillating appeal is that of our simple and Scriptural system to the conscience. We come to professed Christians, and say to them,—Now, don't deceive yourselves; your Lord has devolved on you the conveyance of his gospel. The trust is momentous, and it is unqualified. In vain you invoke earthly powers to share it with you; you have the whole accountability. In your hands is the treasure. If you transmit it not, you are standing between the blood of Christ and those for whom he died. You are incurring all the terrors of their destruction and his wrath. But if you do transmit it; if, in love to the Saviour and to souls, you do communicate his message to the perishing, then in the greatest and most glorious work which the universe and eternity ever contemplated, you enjoy the celestial honour of working together with God; and when your work is closed with your day on earth, you shall thereafter, having turned many to righteousness, shine as the stars for ever and ever. The mind which can resist these claims is dead to all godliness. They must tell on Christian sympathies. They are telling, and that effectively. The standard of liberality is rapidly rising, and the more all frigid legal resorts are abandoned, and the more all defences of them are discredited, and the more the one plea of Christian duty is enjoined and admitted, the more the standard of munificence will rise, till the heretofore disheartened, disparaged charity—not the icy charity of law, but the fervent charity of faith—shall rear her gentle head into the heavens, and smile benignantly on grateful nations, the glory and the joy of the whole earth.



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